



STANDING WITH LEGISLATORS WHO OPPOSE PUTTING ANOTHER TAX INCREASE BEFORE VOTERS

Hon. Michelle Steel & Hon. George Runner Vice Chair, Members of the California Board of Equalization

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[Publisher's Note: As part of an ongoing effort to bring original, thoughtful commentary to you here at the FlashReport, I am pleased to present this column from elected Board of Equalization Members Michelle Steel and George Runner - Flash]

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In a rare appearance before legislators last week, Governor Jerry Brown did his best to tempt Republican legislators into breaking their promise not to raise taxes. He even joked that he would set up "a process to dispense people from their pledges."

What puzzles us is why Jerry Brown would think that Republican lawmakers want to break their pledges. It might seem strange in the world of politics, but the reason we sign pledges is because they represent causes we truly believe in.

And it's difficult to think of anything that unites Republicans more than our firm belief that higher taxes are not the solution to California's problems.

The reason the Governor is having such a hard time getting Republicans to support his budget is because he is asking us to not merely break a pledge but also to violate our core beliefs.

Those beliefs inform our actions—not the reverse. Accordingly, we're pleased to stand with Republican legislators who are members of the newly-formed Taxpayers Caucus, as well as those who have signed pledges not to raise taxes.

We support giving taxpayers a voice in the government because it is their hard-earned money which funds that government.

We support a truly balanced budget because the government, like the average citizen, has a duty to live within its means. It is the responsibility of government to

spend taxpayer dollars judiciously and efficiently, not to pile billions of dollars in debt on the backs of taxpayers and their families.

We oppose tax increases because it is wrong to take more money from those who earned it than is necessary to pay for the key functions of government.

According to the Tax Foundation, Californians worked until April 14 last year to pay their taxes. We pay nearly \$5,000 per person in state and local taxes – the sixth highest tax burden in the nation.

High taxes are a key reason why California's unemployment rate and business climate are among the worst in the nation. Voters seem to understand this better than the Governor, which is why they have rejected nearly every tax increase proposal on the ballot in recent years.

While lobbying for his budget before the Legislature Brown told one Republican to “step up and do something you don’t want to do.” The budget isn’t about what we want or don’t want, it’s about what is right and what is wrong.

The time has long passed for playing games with the budget while increasing spending on the backs of California’s taxpayers. Today we take a stand for fiscal sanity, for jobs, and for allowing California’s citizens the freedom to make a living.